



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Yosemite National Park
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

IN REPLY REFER TO:
A3823(YOSE)

February 19, 2003

Dear Yosemite Friends:

On behalf of the National Park Service, I am pleased to present the Cascades Diversion Dam Removal Project Environmental Assessment. Cascades Diversion Dam is located in Yosemite National Park on the Merced Wild and Scenic River near the intersection of El Portal Road and Big Oak Flat Road. As called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, the National Park Service proposes to remove the dam in order to restore the natural free-flowing condition of the Merced River. Additionally, the structure sustained damage during the flood of 1997 and currently poses a threat of possible uncontrolled and sudden failure. The dam was constructed in 1917 as part of a hydroelectric generating facility that was taken off line in 1985, and no longer serves a useful purpose.

Public and agency participation has been a key element throughout this planning process. In the winter of 2001, Yosemite National Park held informal public scoping to solicit ideas and concerns from park visitors, staff, American Indian groups, scientists, park partner organizations, and government agencies. The planning team reviewed public comments and identified a range of issues and concerns. This information was used to develop the alternatives and analysis in this Cascades Diversion Dam Removal Project Environmental Assessment.

There will be a 30-day comment period on the environmental assessment. If the environmental assessment and a Finding of No Significant Impact are approved, dam removal is expected to take place in fall 2003 in order for demolition of the structure to occur during the period of low water flows.

We appreciate your interest in this planning effort and welcome your participation. Comments must be submitted in writing by March 24, 2003 and may be sent to:

Mail: Superintendent, Yosemite National Park
ATTN.: Cascades Diversion Dam Removal Project
P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, California 95389

Fax: 209/379-1294
Email: Yose_Planning@nps.gov

Written comments will also be accepted at the National Park Service planning open house held on February 26, 2003 (2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center East Auditorium. Planning teams will be on hand to answer questions and provide more information regarding the Cascades Diversion Dam Removal Project, as well as several other Yosemite National Park planning efforts.

This document can be reviewed online at www.nps.gov/yose/planning. To request a printed copy, refer to the information directly above or phone 209/379-1365.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson
Superintendent